NEXT IAS

DAILY CURRENT AFFAIRS (DCA)

Time: 45 Min

Date: 17-04-2025

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SUPREME COURT ON CHILD TRAFFICKING

Context

- Recently, the Supreme Court of India has issued a warning to parents across the country, urging them to remain vigilant against the growing menace of child trafficking.
  - It highlighted that traffickers exploit juvenile protection laws to force children into crime.

About the Child Trafficking

- It is defined as the recruitment, transportation, transfer, harboring, or receipt of a child for the purpose of exploitation.
- **Forms of Child Trafficking:**
  - **Forced Labor:** Children are trafficked into industries such as domestic work, agriculture, and construction.
  - **Sexual Exploitation:** Many victims are forced into prostitution or online exploitation.
  - **Illegal Adoption:** Criminal networks abduct children to sell them for adoption.

Current Scenario and Statistics

- Over 10,000 cases of trafficking were reported, yet only 1,031 convictions were secured (Between 2018 and 2022).
  - Uttar Pradesh, Bihar, and Andhra Pradesh are among the top states with the highest number of trafficked children.
- According to **National Crime Records Bureau (NCRB)** data of 2022, 3098 victims (below 18 years) are rescued.

Challenges in Addressing Child Trafficking

- **Low Conviction Rates:** Despite thousands of arrests, the conviction rate remains below 5%, highlighting gaps in investigation and prosecution.
- **Lack of Awareness and Reporting:** Many cases go unreported due to fear, lack of legal knowledge, and social stigma.
- **Inter-State Trafficking Networks:** Traffickers operate across state borders, making it difficult for law enforcement agencies to track and dismantle these networks.

Legal and Institutional Framework in India

- **Article 23 of the Constitution:** It prohibits trafficking in human beings and forced labor.
- **The Immoral Traffic (Prevention) Act, 1956 (ITPA)**: It criminalizes human trafficking and provides penalties for offenses involving children, especially those trafficked for sexual purposes.
- **Protection of Children from Sexual Offences (POCSO) Act, 2012:** It is designed to protect children from sexual assault, sexual harassment, and pornography.
  - It was passed to address child sexual abuse comprehensively and includes provisions for special courts to try these offenses.
  - It defines a **child as anyone under 18 years of age.**
- **The Juvenile Justice (Care and Protection of Children) Act, 2015:** It defines a child in need of care and protection, including those at risk of trafficking.
  - It mandates rehabilitation through child welfare committees.
- **Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita (BNS), 2023: Sections 143 and 144** are related to provisions for the offences of human trafficking.
  - Also, **Section 111 in BNS** is related to Organized Crimes, covers the crime of trafficking of persons for prostitution.
- **Bhartiya Nagarik Suraksha Sanhita (BNSS):** It recognizes trafficking as a **cognizable and non-bailable offence**.
- **Anti Human Trafficking Units (AHTUs):** Central Government has provided financial assistance to States/ UTs for setting up/ strengthening of AHTUs.
  - Currently, 827 AHTUs are functional including 807 in States/ UTs, 15 in Border Security Forces (BSF) and 5 in Sashastra Seema Bal (SSB).
- **Crime Multi Agency Centre (Cri-MAC):** It was launched by the Ministry **of Home Affairs (MHA)** for **online sharing of information** on crime & criminals on **24x7** basis among various Law Enforcement Agencies and ensure seamless flow of information between them.
- **Ujjawala Scheme (by Ministry of Women and Child Development):** A comprehensive scheme for the prevention of trafficking and rehabilitation of victims through rescue, reintegration, and repatriation.

Global Initiatives Related To Child Trafficking

- **United Nations Protocol to Prevent, Suppress and Punish Trafficking in Persons**: It is known as the **Palermo Protocol** (adopted by UNGA in 2000**)**, that provides a framework for countries to combat trafficking through prevention, protection, and prosecution.
- **Global Report on Trafficking in Persons:** It is published by the **United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC)**, highlighting the trends, patterns, and regional analyses of trafficking.
  - **2024 Edition:** It revealed a 25% increase in detected trafficking victims, with children

accounting for 38% of all victims detected worldwide.

- **International Labour Organization (ILO):** It works to eliminate child labor, a form of trafficking, through initiatives like the **International Programme on the Elimination of Child Labour (IPEC).**

Conclusion

- The Supreme Court's judgment serves as a wake-up call for parents, authorities, and society at large to address the growing threat of child trafficking.
- By emphasizing vigilance, accountability, and swift legal action, the court has laid the groundwork for combating this heinous crime.

Source: TH

T.N. GOVERNMENT ISSUES ADVISORY REITERATING USE OF TAMIL AS OFFICIAL LANGUAGE

Context

- The Tamil Nadu government has issued an advisory to senior officials and heads of departments, reiterating existing provisions and orders **mandating the use of Tamil as the official language in all government offices.**

About

- Tamil is the **official language of the Government of Tamil Nadu,** according to the **Official Languages Act 1956.**
- **As per the Advisory:**
  - Government orders should only be issued in Tamil, and circulars should also be in Tamil.
  - The letters received in Tamil from the public should be replied to in Tamil; the notes about them should also be in Tamil.
  - Government employees should sign only in Tamil in all correspondence.

Regional Languages in State Legislature

- **As per the Article 345:** A State Legislature can choose any language(s) used in the State or Hindi for official work.
  - However, **until the State passes a law to change it**, English will continue to be used for official purposes where it was used before the Constitution began.

Official Language of Union

- English, alongside Hindi, is one of the two **official languages** of the central government.
- **Article 343(2)** says that "for a period of fifteen years from the commencement of this Constitution,

the English language shall continue to be used for all the official purposes of the Union for which it was being used immediately before such commencement". The Constitution of India came into force on January 26, 1950.

- **Under Article 343(3)**, "Parliament may by law provide for the use, after the said period of fifteen years, of— (a) the English language, or (b) the Devanagari form of numerals, for such purposes as may be specified in the law."
- On January 26, 1965, **Section 3 of the Official Languages Act, 1963** came into effect, which provided for the "continuation of English Language for official purposes of the Union and for use in Parliament".

Administrative Efficiency vs. Regional Assertion

- Exclusive use of Tamil may lead to **communication challenges** with central authorities or inter-state coordination.
- Translation requirements for **ordinances and letters could cause delays or errors if not implemented carefully.**
- The directive for government servants to sign in Tamil might pose difficulties for officers from **non-Tamil backgrounds, especially All India Services.**
- Tamil-only directives could require significant technological adjustments, especially in databases, software, and e-governance tools.

Status of Hindi language

- The Constitution of India does not list any one language as India's "national language".
- **Clause 1 of Article 343** (Official language of the Union) says "The official language of the Union shall be Hindi in Devanagari script".
- **Article 351** (Directive for development of the Hindi language) says "It shall be the duty of the Union to promote the spread of the Hindi language, to develop it so that it may serve as a medium of expression for all the elements of the composite culture of India".
  - However, the provision says, this must be done "without interfering with its genius, the forms, style and expressions used in Hindustani and in the other languages of India specified in the **Eighth Schedule".**

Eighth Schedule

- Initially there were only **14 languages in this Schedule.**
- Currently **22 languages are listed under the Eighth Schedule** of the Constitution.

◆ These include Assamese, Bengali, Gujarati, Hindi, Kannada, Kashmiri, Konkani, Malayalam, Manipuri, Marathi, Nepali, Oriya, Punjabi, Sanskrit, Sindhi, Tamil, Telugu, Urdu ,Bodo, Santhali, Maithili and Dogri.

• **English is absent** from the list of 22 in the Eighth Schedule. It is one of the 99 non-scheduled languages of India.

Source: TH

JUSTICE BR GAVAI TO BE THE NEXT CJI

Context

• Chief Justice of India (CJI) Sanjiv Khanna has recommended Justice B.R. Gavai — next in line by seniority — to the Union Law Ministry for appointment as the **52nd Chief Justice of India.**

About Appointment of the CJI

• The **Constitution of India does not mention** any procedure for appointment of the CJI.

• **Article 124 (1)** of the Constitution merely says, "there shall be a Supreme Court of India consisting of a Chief Justice of India."

• **Clause (2) of Article 124** of the Constitution says that every Judge of the Supreme Court shall be **appointed by the President.**

• Thus, in the **absence of a constitutional provision**, the procedure to appoint CJI relies on **convention.**

What is the Convention?

• The outgoing **CJI recommends his successor** a practice, which is **based on seniority.**

• **Seniority at the apex court**, however, is **not defined by age**, but by the **date a judge was appointed to the SC.**

• If two judges are elevated to the Supreme Court on the same day,

◆ the one who was **sworn in first** as a judge would trump another;

◆ if both were sworn in as judges on the same day, the one with **more years of high court service** would 'win' in the seniority stakes;

◆ an appointment **from the bench** would 'trump' in seniority an appointee from the bar.

Roles and Powers of CJI

• **Master of the Roster:** The CJI has the exclusive authority to allocate cases to different benches of the Supreme Court. This power includes determining the schedule and priority of hearings.

• **Appointment of Judges:** The CJI, along with the collegium (comprising the four senior-most Supreme Court judges), plays a crucial role in recommending judges for appointment to the Supreme Court and High Courts. The President consults with the CJI and the collegium during this process.

• **Appointment of Ad-hoc Judges:** Under Article 127 of the Constitution, the CJI can appoint ad-hoc judges to the Supreme Court when necessary.

• **Changing the Seat of the Supreme Court:** With the President's approval, the CJI can relocate the Supreme Court from Delhi to another location.

Removal Process of CJI

• The President of India has the authority to remove the CJI.

• However, the President can only remove the CJI after Parliament presents an address requesting the removal.

• This address must be supported by a special majority in both Houses of Parliament.

Source: TH

GROWING RELEVANCE OF THE NORTHEAST - AS A GATEWAY TO SOUTHEAST ASIA

Context

• External Affairs Minister S Jaishankar highlighted the **growing relevance of the Northeast - as a gateway to Southeast Asia**.
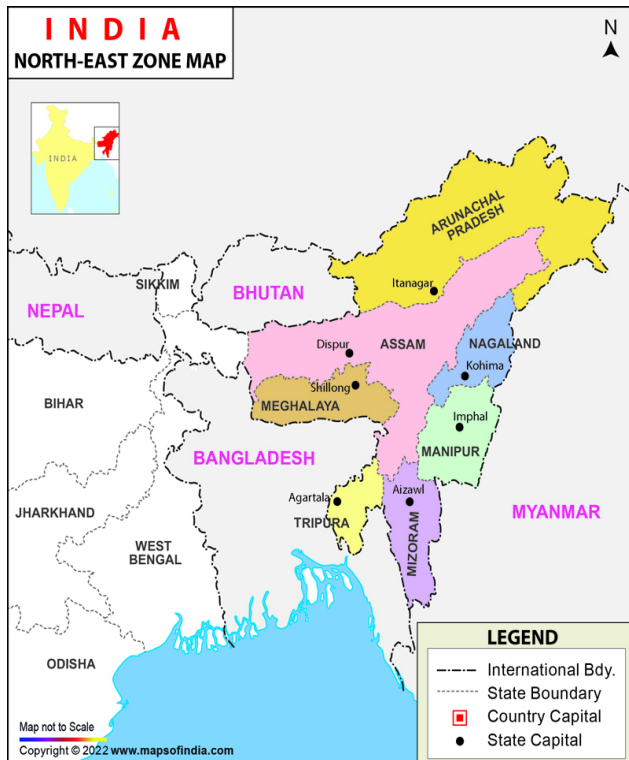
About

• EAM was virtually addressing a meeting of ambassadors for the **upcoming North East Investors Summit 2025.**

• It was organised by the **Ministry of Development of North Eastern Region (DoNER).**

• He said the northeast region is at the heart of many key Indian policies -- **Neighbourhood First, Act East or the Bay of Bengal Initiative for Multi-Sectoral Technical and Economic Cooperation (BIMSTEC).**

North Eastern Region (NER)

• **The NER comprises eight States viz.** Arunachal Pradesh, Assam, Manipur, Meghalaya, Mizoram, Nagaland, Sikkim and Tripura.

- **This region is culturally and ethnically diverse** having **more than 200 ethnic groups** which have distinct languages, dialects and socio-cultural identities.
- The Region covers **7.97% of the country's geographical area** and **3.78%** of its population.
- **It has 5,484 km of international border** viz. Bangladesh (1,880 km), Myanmar (1,643 km), China (1,346 km), Bhutan (516 km) and Nepal (99 km).

How is it a gateway to South East Asia?

- NER has the potential to become a **vibrant link between India and East/Southeast Asia.**

  - **BIMSTEC,** especially countries like Bangladesh, Myanmar, Nepal, and Bhutan, can facilitate cross-border connectivity.

- **Kaladan Multi-Modal Transit Transport Project:** It is aimed at connecting the **port of Kolkata with the port of Sittwe in Rakhine** which would then be connected to **Mizoram by road** and the **Kaladan river which flows by Paletwa.**

  - **Sea route:** Kolkata – Sittwe (Myanmar).
  - **River route:** Sittwe – Paletwa.
  - **Road route:** Paletwa – Zorinpui (Mizoram border).

- **India-Myanmar-Thailand highway:** The **1,400-km-long highway** that connects the **three nations is nearly 70% completed**, but the rest of the work has been affected at several places due to political changes in Myanmar since the military coup in 2021.

- **Motor Vehicles Agreements (MVA):** Crucial for seamless cross-border movement of goods and people. **Two MVAs in progress:**

  - BBIN MVA (Bangladesh, Bhutan, India, Nepal)
  - India-Myanmar-Thailand MVA.

- **Modern investments come via Japan's Overseas Development Assistance (ODA):**

  - India-Japan Act East Forum (established 2017).
  - Facilitates infrastructure and cultural connectivity projects in the NER.

Concerns

- **Connectivity corridors (road and rail)** are key to integrating India with Bangladesh, Bhutan, Nepal, and ASEAN countries.

  - **Mountainous terrain** makes railway construction challenging in the NER.

- **Insurgent groups** disrupt progress, including abductions of Indian workers.

- **Myanmar's ongoing political turmoil** hampers project completion and cooperation.

- **Motor Vehicles Agreements (MVA):** Bhutan withdrew from BBIN MVA over environmental concerns.

  - Thailand is hesitant due to potential disadvantages for local businesses.

Way Ahead

- Historically neglected, the **northeast has gained prominence in recent decades.**

- Its **strategic value has increased** due to **India's 'Act East' Policy and evolving Indo-Pacific geopolitical dynamics.**

- The region is now seen as a **vital gateway for India's regional connectivity initiatives.**

- Ongoing connectivity efforts require **capacity-building for rail and road projects** and **improved border infrastructure.**

- The overarching goal is to **maximise the multi-dimensional potential** of the northeast and **cement its role as a regional connectivity hub.**

About Siliguri Corridor

- It is also referred to as the **Chicken's Neck,** is a narrow strip of land in West Bengal that connects the Northeastern States to the rest of the country.

BHUTAN

NEPAL

⬤ Siliguri

BANGLADESH

•••••• Nepal border
•••••• Bhutan border
•••••• Bangladesh border

- It is a very important strategic area of eastern India, located between **Mahananda and Teesta river.**

Significance of Siliguri Corridor

- **Strategic Connectivity:** If disrupted, it would isolate the north east states, making it difficult for the government to supply essential goods, services, and military support.

- **Military and Defense Considerations:** It lies close to sensitive international borders, particularly with China, Nepal, and Bangladesh.

  - It ensures unhindered movement of Indian forces and supplies in the event of a conflict.

- **Geopolitical Vulnerability:** The narrowness of the corridor makes it vulnerable to blockages or control by adversaries.

  - Any disruption could sever India's access to the northeast, giving external powers an opportunity to influence or destabilize the region.

- **Economic and Trade Importance:** It also facilitates cross-border trade with neighboring countries like Bangladesh.

- **Internal Security:** Ensuring the security of the Siliguri Corridor is important for internal peace, as it helps prevent external influences from destabilizing the region and supports national unity.
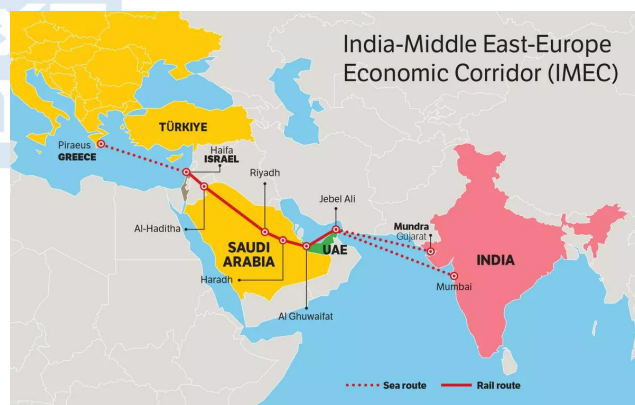
Source: TH

INDIA-MIDDLE EAST-EUROPE ECONOMIC CORRIDOR (IMEC)

In News

- The Union Minister of Commerce and Industry emphasized the potential of **India-Middle East-Europe Economic Corridor (IMEC)** as a **modern-day Silk Route** aimed at connecting Asia with **Europe through the Middle East.**

About India-Middle East-Europe Economic Corridor (IMEC)

- **Establishment:** The MoU signed by leaders from India, the European Union, France, Germany, Italy, Saudi Arabia, UAE, and the US at the G20 Summit (2023) in New Delhi directly points to the official announcement and initial steps for the IMEC.

- **Aim:** The description of a multi-modal connectivity project involving ports, railways, roads, sea lines, and pipelines to enhance trade between India, the Arabian Peninsula, the Mediterranean region, and Europe perfectly aligns with the stated goals of the IMEC.

- **Corridors:** The division into an Eastern corridor (India to the Gulf) and a Northern corridor (the Gulf to Europe) is a key structural element of the IMEC.

India-Middle East-Europe Economic Corridor (IMEC)

Significance IMEC for India

- **Strategic Geopolitical Influence:**

  - **Counter to China's BRI:** IMEC is viewed as a Western-backed alternative to China's Belt and Road Initiative (BRI), giving India a key role in shaping global connectivity.

  - **Strengthens ties with West Asia and Europe:** It enhances India's diplomatic and trade engagement with countries like UAE, Saudi Arabia, Israel, and EU nations.

- **Trade and Economic Boost:**

  - **Faster, cheaper trade routes:** IMEC offers an efficient corridor for Indian exports to reach European markets through the Middle East, reducing transit time and cost.

- **Economic integration:** Encourages foreign investment in India's ports, railways, and logistics sectors, boosting employment and GDP.
- **Energy Security:**
  - Facilitates better energy cooperation, especially in green hydrogen, natural gas, and renewable energy, aligning with India's transition to clean energy.
  - Enhances connectivity to Gulf energy hubs like Saudi Arabia and UAE.
- **Digital Infrastructure and Technology:**
  - Includes plans for digital connectivity (like fiber-optic cables) between India, Middle East, and Europe—critical for tech partnerships and cyber cooperation.
- **Infrastructure and Maritime Development:**
  - Boosts India's port-led development under the Sagarmala Project by integrating Indian ports into global logistics chains. Logistics cost can be reduced up to 30%.
- **Multilateral Cooperation:**
  - Reinforces India's image as a responsible global player and a vital link between Global South and Global North.
  - Encourages triangular cooperation with the US, EU, and Gulf nations.

Challenges

- **Geopolitical Instability:**
  - Ongoing conflicts like the Israel-Palestine crisis, the friction between Iran and Gulf nations, and general regional unrest can impact corridor planning and operations.
  - Issues like piracy, naval skirmishes, or blockades in these crucial chokepoints can seriously jeopardize smooth trade flow.
- **Infrastructure and Funding Hurdles:**
  - Setting up multimodal logistics points like ports, railways, energy systems, and digital networks requires a hefty investment from both public and private sectors.
  - Challenges such as land acquisition, getting regulatory approvals, and navigating bureaucratic red tape across various countries can slow down infrastructure development.
- **Multinational Coordination:**
  - IMEC brings together several sovereign nations (India, UAE, Saudi Arabia, Jordan, Israel, and EU countries), each with its own set of priorities, policies, and political landscapes.
- **Technological and Digital Standardization:**
  - The corridor features digital and energy elements, including data cables and green energy grids and ensures that everything works seamlessly while checking other technological challenges.
- **Competition from Existing Routes:**
  - Current maritime routes through the Suez Canal or even China's BRI corridors might still be more affordable. India needs to make sure that IMEC is not only cost-effective but also logistically superior to draw in global businesses.

Source: DD News

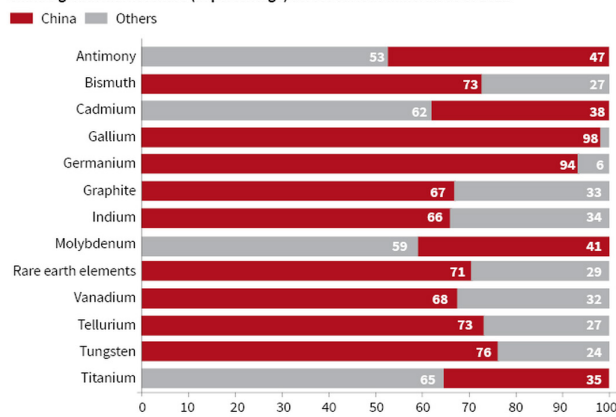## CHINA RESTRICTS EXPORTS OF RARE EARTHS

In News

- Recently, China announced restrictions on the export of seven **Rare Earth Elements** which includes samarium, gadolinium, terbium, dysprosium, lutetium, scandium, and yttrium following U.S. President Trump's tariff impositions.

Rare Earth Elements (REEs)

China, a leading player in critical minerals

China's dominance in critical minerals stems from its vast resource base and strategic investments across the value chain. As the world's largest mining nation, China has discovered 173 types of minerals

China's global market share (in percentage) across various minerals as of 2022

Mineral	China	Others
Antimony	47	53
Bismuth	73	27
Cadmium	38	62
Gallium	98	
Germanium	94	6
Graphite	67	33
Indium	66	34
Molybdenum	59	41
Rare earth elements	71	29
Vanadium	68	32
Tellurium	73	27
Tungsten	76	24
Titanium	65	35

- They are a set of **17 chemical elements in the periodic table** — cerium (Ce), dysprosium (Dy), erbium (Er) etc. All have similar chemical properties and **appear silver-coloured.**
- Despite their name, they are not as rare as they appear, but concentrated, economically mineable deposits are hard to find.
- China has dominated the **rare earth** market since the 1**990s, supplying 85-95% of global demand.**

Importance

- **Rare Earth Elements (REEs)** are crucial in various industries, including clean energy (electric vehicles and wind turbines), electronics

(digital displays), and automobile manufacturing (magnets for power steering, windows, and speakers).

- They are also crucial for manufacturing high-tech products including defense.

Consequences of China's Export Restrictions

- **China dominates** the **global supply of critical minerals**, controlling vast reserves and processing capabilities, including 87% of rare earth processing and major shares in lithium, cobalt, and silicon refining.

  - The new controls are expected to **disrupt industries globally reliant on rare earths**, leading to **higher prices and potential supply shortages.**

- As supply tightens, the **prices of REEs are expected to surge** which could further raise the production cost & overall prices.

- REEs are crucial for **manufacturing advanced military technologies** like fighter jets (e.g., F-35), submarines (e.g., Virginia and Columbia class), missiles (e.g., Tomahawk)

- The mining process can also cause **significant environmental damage**, as it releases harmful substances like arsenic and cadmium.

Status in India

- India has significant reserves of rare earth elements in the states of Andhra Pradesh, Karnataka, Odisha, and Kerala. The **monazite sands** in Kerala are **particularly rich in REEs.**

- India faces acute vulnerability with **over 40% dependency on China** for six key **minerals:** bismuth (85.6%), lithium (82%), silicon (76%), titanium (50.6%), tellurium (48.8%), and graphite (42.4%).

- Despite having significant **mineral resources**, India lacks the technology to extract minerals like lithium from its own deposits.

> **Do you know ?**
>
> - In 2023, India identified 30 critical minerals essential for its economic growth and national security, with a significant dependency on imports, especially from China.

Conclusion and Way Forward

- REEs' unique magnetic and optical properties make them indispensable in modern technology.

- In this context, India is working to diversify its supply chain by investing in overseas assets, joining global initiatives like the **Minerals Security Partnership, and promoting recycling and research.**

- However, reducing dependency on China will require long-term investment and sustained efforts.

- There is a need to develop national policies and implementation strategies for ensuring indigenous supply of REEs.

Source :IE

PARTICULATE MATTER TRADING SCHEME IN GUJARAT

Context

- A study found that the Surat Emission Trading Scheme (ETS) in Gujarat, delivered both environmental and economic benefits.

About

- The Emission Trading Scheme (ETS) in Surat, launched in **2019,** is the **world's first market-based trading system for particulate matter (PM)** emissions and India's first pollution trading scheme of any kind.

- It represents a **cap-and-trade system**, where total emissions are capped and emission permits can be traded among industrial units.

- It was developed by the **Gujarat Pollution Control Board (GPCB),** in collaboration with the Energy Policy Institute at the University of Chicago.

How does the Scheme Work?

- **Continuous Emissions Monitoring Systems (CEMS):** 318 coal-using industrial units were mandated to install CEMS to enable real-time tracking of PM emissions.

  - This marked a shift from the earlier system of periodic spot checks.

  - GPCB set a cap of **170 tonnes/month** based on real-time CEMS data.

- **Auctioning:** The GPCB issued about 80% of the emissions cap in free permits, distributed in proportion to a plant's emissions potential (e.g., boiler size), while the remaining 20% were auctioned weekly.

- Firms failing to hold enough permits to match their emissions were **penalised proportionally.**
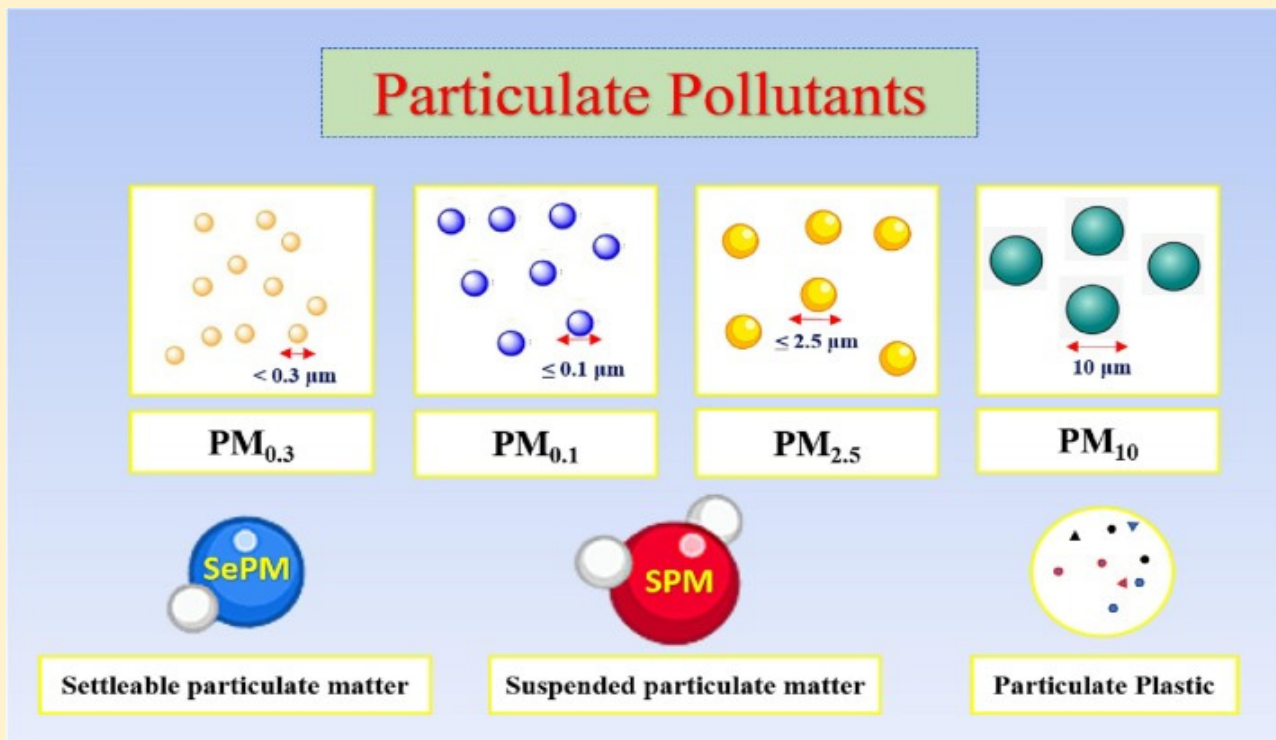
Key Achievements of Surat ETS

Parameter	Impact
Pollution Reduction	20–30% reduction in PM emissions
Cost Efficiency	Over 10% decrease in pollution abatement costs
Compliance	99% compliance with environmental norms

Significance of the Programme

- **Environmental Innovation:** being the first cap-and-trade system globally for PM emissions it showcases India's leadership in market-based environmental regulation.
- **Data-Driven Policy:** The use of real-time CEMS data allowed for evidence-based regulation and gradual tightening of caps to match actual emissions levels.
- **Scalability:** The success in Surat paves the way for similar schemes in other Indian cities and for other pollutants, including NOx and SO .

What is Particulate Matter (PM)?

- Particulate matter (PM) refers to the wide variety of tiny substances that float in the air in the form of either solid particles or liquid droplets or both.
- Based on particle size, PM is divided into four groups:
  - **PM10,** known as the coarse particulate matter, which is ≤10 μm in size;
  - **PM2.5,** known as the fine particulate matter, which is ≤2.5 μm in size;
  - **PM0.3** particles with a diameter of <0.3 μm are known as quasi-ultrafine particles;
  - **PM0.1,** known as the ultrafine particulate matter, which is ≤0.1 μm in size.

Sources of Particulate Matter

- **Natural Sources:** Dust storms, Forest fires, Volcanic eruptions
- **Anthropogenic Sources:** Vehicle exhaust, Industrial emissions, Construction activities and Biomass and fossil fuel burning.

Health Impacts of PM

- **Respiratory diseases:** Asthma, bronchitis, chronic obstructive pulmonary disease (COPD).
- **Cardiovascular issues:** Increased risk of heart attacks and hypertension.
- **Neurological disorders:** Cognitive decline and neurodevelopmental issues in children.
- **Premature mortality:** Prolonged exposure increases the risk of early deaths due to lung and heart diseases.

Source: DTE

═══ NEWS IN SHORT ═══

KAILASH MANSAROVAR PILGRIMAGE

In News

- India and China are in advanced talks to resume the **Kailash Mansarovar Yatra**, suspended since 2019 due to COVID-19 and border tensions.

About Kailash Mansarovar pilgrimage

- It is organized by the **Ministries of External and Home Affairs**, Indo-Tibetan Border Police, and the governments of Delhi, Sikkim, and Uttarakhand, along with state agencies like Kumaon Mandal Vikas Nigam.
- It was conducted until 2020 via two official routes: **Lipulekh Pass (Uttarakhand,** since 1981) and **Nathu La Pass (Sikkim,** since 2015).
- It holds deep religious and cultural significance for **Hindus, Jains, and Buddhists,** attracting hundreds of pilgrims each year.
- It is open to eligible Indian citizens with valid passports for religious purposes.
  - The Government does not provide any financial assistance or subsidy for the Yatra.

Source :TH

COTTON YARN

Context

- Bangladesh has restricted import of yarn from India through its land ports.

About

- **Cotton yarn** is a natural fiber yarn made entirely from cotton fibers, harvested from the cotton plant.
- It is **soft, breathable, and absorbent**, making it a popular choice for various applications like **clothing, knitting, crocheting, and crafting.**
- Cotton yarn can be categorized into **carded, combed, and compact yarns,** depending on the spinning process and quality.

India's Cotton Yarn Exports

- India is one of the largest producers and exporters of cotton yarn globally.
- India exported cotton yarn worth **$1.6 billion in 2024** and manmade fibre (MMF) yarn worth nearly **$85 million.**
- **Major export destinations** include Bangladesh, China, United States and UAE.

> **Confederation of Indian Textile Industry**
>
> - Confederation of Indian Textile Industry (CITI), evolved from the **Indian Cotton Mills' Federation (ICMF)** in **2005**.
>   - ICMF was set up in **1958** and was incorporated as a company in **1967.**
> - It is the **only National Association** that covers the **entire spectrum of the Textile and Clothing Industry** spanning domestic and exporting units, including regional and sectoral associations from farms to garments and even textile machinery.
> - CITI works as an **interface between the Government of India and Industry**.

Source: TH

INDIA'S RETAIL INFLATION HITS SIX-YEAR LOW

In News

- India's retail inflation dropped to 4.6% in the fiscal year 2024-25, the lowest since 2018-19.

CPI-based Inflation or Retail Inflation

- Inflation reflects the rise in prices of c**ommodities in an economy.**
- Retail inflation is measured using the Consumer Price Index (CPI), which calculates a weighted average of prices for a basket of consumer goods and services.
  - Hence, retail inflation is also referred to as CPI-based inflation.
- CPI tracks the cost of a fixed basket of goods and services, and its movements signal inflation trends, affecting purchasing power and economic policy.
- In India, it is calculated by the **National Statistical Office (NSO) under Ministry of Statistics and Programme Implementation (MoSPI) using 2012 as the base year.**
- In India, along with the general CPI (CPI–Combined), segment-specific indices are also published to cater to different population groups:
  - **CPI (IW)** – Consumer Price Index for Industrial Workers
  - **CPI (AL)** – Consumer Price Index for Agricultural Labourers
  - **CPI (RL)** – Consumer Price Index for Rural Labourers

Source: TH

NEW SPECIES OF FROG NAMED AFTER ASSAM COLLEGE

Context

- A new frog species named **Leptobrachium aryatium** has been discovered in the **Garbhanga Reserve Forest** on the edge of **Guwahati, Assam.**

About

- The species is named after **Arya Vidyapeeth College,** a reputed institution in Guwahati.
- It was initially misidentified as **Leptobrachium smithi in 2004.**
- **Leptobrachium genus:** It includes 38 known species.
  - These frogs are stocky with broad heads, and distinctively coloured eyes and short limbs.
  - Found across Southern China, India, Southeast Asia, and the Philippines.
- **Unique Features of the Frog:**
  - Fiery orange-and-black eyes.
  - Reticulated throat pattern.
  - Smooth, rhythmic call at dusk.

Garbhanga Reserve Forest

- It is situated in the southwestern part of Guwahati, Assam, bordering the state of Meghalaya.

- **Ecological Significance:** Acts as a green lung for Guwahati by helping regulate the city's climate and water systems.
  - Plays a crucial role in groundwater recharge and maintaining urban ecological balance.
- **Threats:** Urban expansion and habitat destruction are major threats.
  - Illegal encroachments and infrastructure projects have put pressure on its delicate ecosystem.

Source: TH

MACGREGOR MEMORIAL MEDAL AWARD

Context

- **Chief of Defence Staff** felicitated **five individuals from the Armed Forces of MacGregor Memorial Medal Award.**

About

- It was **instituted in 1888**, and commemorates **Major Gen Sir Charles Metcalfe MacGregor,** founder of the **United Service Institution of India established in 1870.**
  - USI was established to advance military knowledge and professional development among British Indian Army officers.
- It was originally intended to r**ecognise the acts of military reconnaissance and exploratory journeys.**
  - The medal's **scope was expanded in 1986,** post-independence, to include military expeditions and adventure activities.
- The medal is **open to all ranks** (serving and retired) of the Armed Forces, Territorial Army, Reserve Forces, Rashtriya Rifles and Assam Rifles.
- To date, **127 medals** have been awarded, including **103** prior to independence.

Source: PIB